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SENSITIVE

SIPDIS

E.O. 12958: N/A

TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [MOPS](#) [KPKO](#) [CG](#)

SUBJECT: CATHOLIC CONFERENCE OF DRC CONDEMS
RENEWED VIOLENCE IN EASTERN DRC

REFS: A) KINSHASA 882 B) 07 KINSHASA 842

¶1. (U) The Congolese Catholic Conference of Bishops ("Conference Episcopale Nationale du Congo" - CENCO - in French) issued a statement October 13 expressing grave concern about the resumption of hostilities between armed groups and government forces in the eastern part of the country. The statement condemned the use of violence to resolve differences and advance hidden agendas. CENCO censured in severest terms the recruitment of child soldiers as combatants and the use of civilian populations as human shields. The declaration was signed by Father Leonard Santedi, Secretary General of CENCO, for the President of CENCO Monsignor Nicolas Djomo, who is Bishop of Tshumbe.

¶2. (U) CENCO called on recently nominated Prime Minister Adolphe Muzito (ref A) and his government to use the "republican army" to re-establish state authority and protect the DRC's borders and population. CENCO reiterated the message that the national unity and territorial integrity of the Congo are non-negotiable and expressed fears that the renewal of hostilities actually masked efforts to exploit natural resources and achieve the "balkanization" of the DRC (ref B). Adopting a warning tone, the statement declared that the population will judge the government by its ability to respond to the great challenges facing the country.

¶3. (U) CENCO appealed to the international community to compel signatories of the Goma Agreements ("Actes d'Engagement" in French) to respect the accords. The statement said there is no peace without justice, and added that all religious and charitable organizations, regardless of denomination, should demonstrate solidarity in recognizing the suffering of victims of the conflict. The statement referenced the inclusion of North Kivu in the Angelus prayer delivered by Pope Benedict on October 12.

¶4. (SBU) Comment: The ascension of Kinshasa Archbishop Laurent Monsengwo to the leadership of the Catholic Church in February 2008 carries the prospect of continued involvement by the influential Catholic Church in national politics. Monsengwo, a controversial figure who was involved in efforts to negotiate former dictator Mobutu's exit from power in the 1990's, is considered an opponent of President Joseph Kabilé and his government, which is dominated by politicians from the southern and eastern provinces of the DRC. At the very least, the letter is seen by many observers as too little and too late, particularly given the prestige of the Catholic Church in the DRC. End Comment.

BROCK